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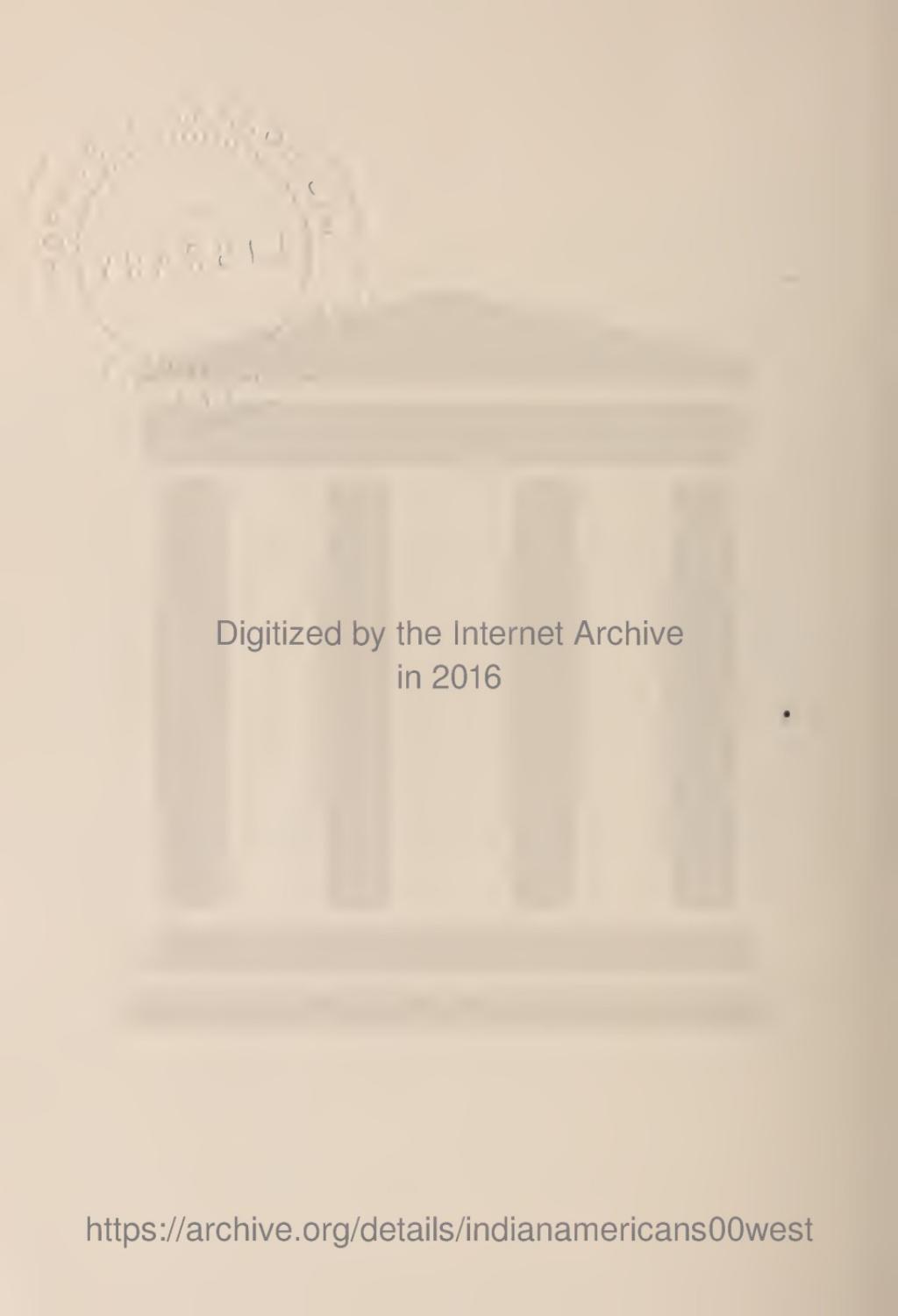
MAY 22 1957

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Indian Americans . . .

. . . The Church's Concern



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# Indian Americans . . .

## . . . The Church's Concern

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What is it like, bringing the gospel of Christ to the Indian Americans? When America was very young it meant setting out into a vast, untracked wilderness, armed only with prayers and the Holy Scriptures. It meant telling the story of salvation to buckskin-clad people who prayed to nature gods and held the "Little People" accountable for the unexplained happenings in nature.

A little later it meant setting up an elaborate mission program on an Indian reservation, with day schools and welfare services as well as evangelistic activities.

What is the work like today? Today it is at once simpler and more complex.

It is simpler:

- 1) Because the Church itself has grown larger and stronger, making it better able to support a mission program.
- 2) Because government schools, public schools and welfare agencies now take care of much of the educational and welfare work which once was the sole responsibility of the Christian missionaries.
- 3) Because in many ways the Indian people have adopted the manner of life of those who have immigrated to America. The fact that most Indians now speak English makes communication much easier.

But mission work today is also more complex than ever before:

- 1) Because the Indian American is in a period of transition, with some still clinging to rural reservation life while others live in an urban, industrialized society. No single approach will be adequate for Indians in this variety of situations.
- 2) Because poverty is almost always a problem both on the reservation and in the cities.
- 3) Because many Indians bear deep psychological scars as the result of living for generations as a conquered people.

Contrary to much popular opinion, the Indian Americans are not members of a vanishing race. As a matter of fact, the census figures indicate that the Indian population is increasing at a faster pace than the non-Indian population. There are almost 400,000 Indians in America today, with about 245,000 of these still living on reservations.

But in a very real sense the Indian American is a "displaced person." Driven from the land over which he had roamed as free as the birds and the buffalo and forced out of the cultural pattern which had always been his, he feels uprooted and homeless in the land which for uncounted centuries had belonged to his people.

Whether he resides on a reservation, in a small town or in an industrialized center, he finds that he will be accepted most readily if he becomes a "white man." Economic and social success come most easily to the Indian who gives up his right to be an Indian. People of many nations have surrendered most of their inherited culture in the melting pot of America's culture. But in all other instances the surrender has been *voluntary*. They have *chosen* to be uprooted in order to become a part of America's life.

The Indian, on the other hand, had no choice. Even Christian missionaries have first uprooted the Indian from his culture and then have given him the "white man's religion" rather than try the more difficult task of planting the seed of Christianity in the soil of Indian culture. The result has been tragic demoralization and a broken spirit.

Daisuke Kitagawa, a noted churchman of Japanese background, has made an analysis of racial and cultural relations in the ministry to Indian Americans. He observes: "A genuine Christian who by virtue of his Christianity transcends his nationality, race, culture or any other creaturely and human limitations is he who in the name of God accepts them. Such a Christian man can also accept others for what they are . . . An American Indian who is enough a Christian to transcend his Indian-ness is one who in the name of Christ can and does accept his Indian-ness."

The first Protestant missionary to the Indian Americans was the Rev. John Campanius, a Lutheran pastor, in 1642. It was he who also first translated a Christian book, *Luther's Small Catechism*, into an Indian dialect.

Soon, however, the Lutheran Church became so preoccupied with taking care of the Lutherans immigrating from European countries that the Indian work was all but forgotten.

In the intervening years special work among the Indians has been limited to a very few missions. In recent years, however, there has been a revival of interest in this neglected opportunity. Lutheran Christians are asking, "What are we doing for Indians still living on reservations?" and "Are we reaching them with Christ's gospel as they take their place in the industrialized centers of America?"



## Reservation Indians . . . . . . The Church's Concern

It was in September of 1928 that the National Indian Mission (an inter-denominational group) turned over its work on the Rocky Boy, Montana, reservation to the United Lutheran Church in America.

At that time the reservation itself was very young. In 1916 a former military reservation had been given to a band of homeless Indians, led by Chief Rocky Boy. The interdenominational work began in 1920.

The Rev. and Mrs. William H. Gable, the first Lutheran missionaries at Rocky Boy, gave 18 years of their lives to the work. For a number of years the Women's Missionary Society of the United Lutheran Church in America assumed full financial support, and the women's group still bears a heavy share of the financial load. Missionaries from 1946 to 1950 were Pastor and Mrs. George Overdier.

Since 1950 the missionaries have been Pastor and Mrs. John Dehaan. Mr. and Mrs. John Allemeier were mission helpers for a time, and the helper this year has been Jack Bozick, a tall, broad-shouldered 18-year-old who plans to study for the ministry.

The Rocky Boy reservation is scattered through the beautiful tree-covered Bear Paw Mountains south of Havre, Montana, and stretches out over the plains around the village of Box Elder.

The tiny homes in the hollows or along the slopes of the mountains are usually built of logs or rough planks. Many Rocky Boy Indians still use tepees or tents for summer living, but few spend the winters without some sort of cabin arrangement.

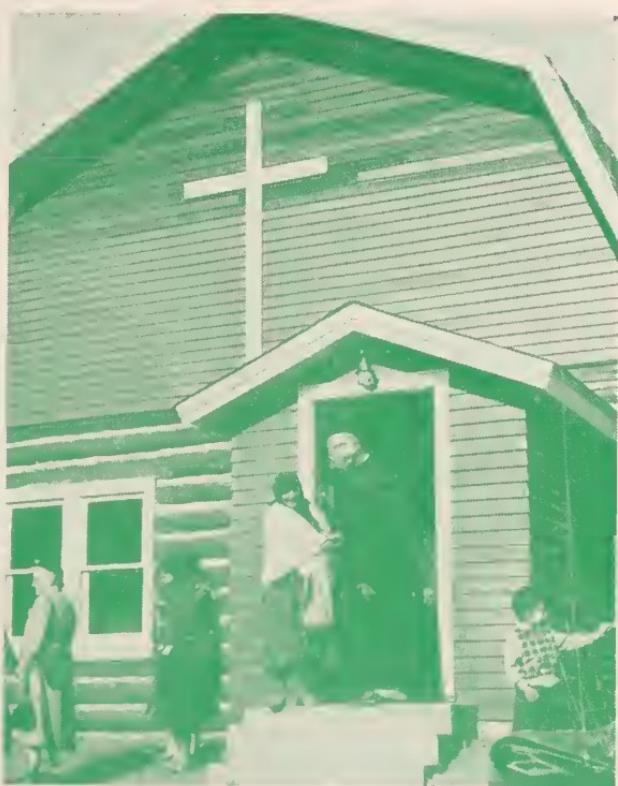
It is not uncommon to see a buffalo hide stretched over the outside wall of the house to dry. A number of the Indians stack their wood tepee fashion outside the door, and occasionally one can still see a small tripod from which is suspended a bag of "Indian medicine" — herbs which are reputed to have healing powers.

Because there is no refrigeration, one will generally see meat hanging from the ceilings of the little houses, being dried into "jerky."

Outdoor privies are erected with little regard for drainage problems. A few of the Indian homes are now equipped with electricity, but for most families, it is an unattainable luxury. Water for household use is often drawn from the creek.

Most of Rocky Boy's Indians are of the Cree tribe, originating in Canada, although there are also some Chippewas. Cree is the language used in the Indian homes, but in school the youngsters are also taught English.

In an arid region where a white farmer may require several thousand



Rocky Boy Mission Chapel, Rocky Boy, Montana

acres of level land to make a living, a Rocky Boy family is assigned about 160 acres of rocky hilly land owned by the tribe.

Although theoretically the Indians might be expected to do "subsistence farming," raising their own vegetables and livestock, in actuality it does not work out that way, because the work which they are able to find away from the reservation is to be had during the growing season. Rock-clearing, fence-mending and harvest-field labor draw them from their reservation homes during the spring, summer and early fall.

The government has initiated a cattle program at Rocky Boy. When the time comes for the Indian families to leave for summer work, all the cattle are driven high up in the mountains to feed, with two Indian men assigned to watch over them.

February and March, when the money earned during the previous summer has all been spent, are lean months for the reservation Indians, many of whom actually go hungry until the spring work begins. In the winter months death strikes often in the tents and cabins at Rocky Boy. Hunger often brings the Indians to the door of the Mission House.

Even to those Indians who have discarded the Sun Dance as an act of religious devotion, the annual event is the year's social climax. Indians come from far and near, pitching their tents or erecting their tepees in a huge circular encampment. A large lodge is built at the center of the camp. Its central pole is decorated with the thunder bird, the messenger of God, according to Cree tradition.

Even the Lutheran missionary pastor finds that his calendar is planned around the June Sun Dance, because a great summer exodus from Rocky Boy takes place soon after the event is over.

The summer Bible School, the most ambitious educational project of the mission, is planned for the two weeks following the Sun Dance, a time when the adults are putting up hay. Pastor Dehaan has learned that July finds Rocky Boy virtually deserted. Then whole families leave to find summer work, clearing rocks or working in the sugar beet fields.

A cluster of government buildings house the offices of the government Indian agency and the tribal offices. The agency also runs three schools for the grammar school youngsters. High school students attend public school at Box Elder or Indian Schools at Pierre or Flandreau.

In the government schools high quality instruction is given in basic subjects. The emphasis on good housekeeping may be observed in the vigor with which the tots tackle their afternoon clean-up period and in the neat rows of rubbers which are lined up on the school steps.

In school, too, the children have an opportunity to develop their natural skill for art work. Skin painting, water colors, pencil sketches — all reflect a vitality and a sense of design which are rare indeed among youngsters of such tender years. Penmanship is not even taught in the schools because the Indian children master the skill so easily.

Customs and folk-ways quite different from their own Indian culture are brought back to the reservation by returning servicemen, students and summer workers. The result is an interesting blend of the old and the new, curiously contrasting elements of Indian and non-Indian culture.

At Rocky Boy you may see teen-age boys and old men with their black hair worn in long braids, women in knee-high leather moccasins, plump babies in buckskin papoose-carriers. But at Rocky Boy you will also see the latest hair-do's, modern cars and modern dress. In the roomy deep-freeze at the agency school is a supply of "buffalo-burger." The same home which is equipped with a white-enameled electric washer may have an "Indian medicine" tripod in the front yard.

The three main buildings in the complex which form the Lutheran mission are the Mission house, the parsonage and the log chapel. The Mission House, a white frame structure with brown gables, contains a fellowship hall, a kitchen, a beadwork room, two classrooms, a full basement and an attic.

From the time when Pastor Dehaan first began his work at Rocky Boy in 1951, he had eyed the abandoned log chapel standing next to the mission house. Although the big assembly room in the Mission House served fairly well as a place of worship, it was the hip-roofed building next door, in a serious state of disrepair, which still somehow spelled "church" to the missionary.

The state of the budget and the difficulty of inducing a carpenter to come up into the mountains convinced Pastor Dehaan that the construction would have to be done with "volunteer labor." A professional mover was hired to jack up the building, after which the pastor, his mission helper John Allemeier, and the Indian men began the task of reconstruction. A foundation was laid, bad logs replaced and the walls pulled back into line. New chinking and new windows and frames were added.

In memory of a Pennsylvania serviceman, a small stained glass window was placed above the simple altar. In the central panel is the Inviting Christ, while the side panels contain crossed arrows, the Indian symbol of friendship.

The old reed organ was also given a new lease on life. Pastor Dehaan acquired a second-hand vacuum cleaner with enough power to force air through the organ. The cleaner is suspended from wires in the attic so that the sound of its vibrations will not submerge the music.

A Great Northern Railroad employee from Minneapolis, visiting the mission, noted that the small chapel bell was no longer usable. He secured an old locomotive bell to hang in the little cross-tipped belfry.

Several coats of cottage-brown paint on the exterior, and the old log chapel was once again ready to function as Rocky Boy's Church — and at a cost of only \$3,000! The building was rededicated in 1953, the twenty-fifth anniversary of Lutheran work at Rocky Boy.

Every Sunday morning the pastor's station wagon and the mission bus follow the twisting mountain roads to Rocky Boy's farthest limits, gathering the children for Sunday school. Waiting beside the road are children like Robert Ironmaker and Amy Ridingbird, Ruby Big Knife and Melvin Weaselboy—eager to earn another gold star for the chart on the Mission House wall, but eager also to sing songs, draw pictures and hear stories about the Saviour.

Later the children join the adult Indians and the families of agency employees for the Sunday worship service. They sing the great hymns from the Lutheran hymnal and the responses of the common service liturgy. Pastor Dehaan, gowned in a plain black robe, tells the good news of Christ's redemption. Sacrificial gifts are carried in woven baskets to the chapel altar.

Interpreter for the mission since its founding has been Malcolm Mitchell (Yellow Bird). Reluctant at first to accept the difficult task, he finally became convinced that God meant to use him in this way. From that day — and all through the years — he has been given the power to translate without hesitation the words of English sermons and prayers into the soft accents of the Crees. Sunday evenings are devoted to Luther League meetings, social events for young married couples or family nights.

Tuesday is beadwork day at the Mission House. Mrs. Dehaan inspects the articles which the Indian women bring in, to be sent on consignment to Lutheran churches. The room smells of home-tanned leather used in the beaded moccasins. On the tables and in the showcases are brightly beaded belts and luggage tags, bracelets and earrings.

One afternoon a month a little group of women attends Women's Mis-

sionary Society. Wednesday is the evening for boys' and girls' clubs. All the teen-agers have a devotional period together, with hymn singing, Bible study and prayer. Then there is a craft period, with the girls doing sewing or embroidery and the boys busy at leatherwork or other crafts. Games, folk dancing and lunch conclude the evening.

Lunchtime is early on Thursday at the parsonage so Mrs. Dehaan can get to the Mission House early to sort quilt pieces for Sewing Club. As she takes scraps of new cotton material from the big cardboard boxes or tears the strings from the brightly patterned feed sacks, she thinks with gratitude of women all over the country who remember the Indian work with their gifts.

It isn't long before the women begin to come. There is Lucille Windy Boy, a tall young woman with her black hair in long braids. Her plump, brown-eyed baby Kevin sleeps placidly in his buckskin papoose carrier. She takes the quilt pieces from her sewing bag and sits down beside Dorothy Sun Child Small, a handsome young woman whose son Bobby plays happily at her feet. Dorothy's quilt, in vivid blocks of red and white, promises to be an attractive one.

Sitting cross-legged on the floor over by the window are Grandma Bigbow and three of her friends, their heads wrapped in kerchiefs, and soft leather moccasins binding their feet and legs. There are many others.

The placid smiles of the young matrons, the soft Cree dialect of the older women, the light-footed, mannerly romping of the youngsters, the gentle laughter which occasionally breaks through the conversation—all are fused in the atmosphere of serenity.



Mrs. Ray Whitewing and her children

It is easy to forget, at least for the moment, that Sewing Club for the women at Rocky Boy, is not just a pleasant diversion. These quilts, for which the mission provides the bats and the backing, become frighteningly essential when the cold mountain wind hurls itself against the poorly insulated walls of the tiny cabins.

Pastor Dehaan makes his appearance at 3 o'clock, reading to them from the Bible, speaking briefly about spiritual matters, leading in prayers. Mrs.

Malcolm Mitchell, wife of the mission's official interpreter, sits beside the pastor and repeats each sentence after him in Cree.

Kitchen committee members pour steaming cups of coffee and walk among the club members with white enamel pans heaped high with paper-wrapped packages of sandwiches and doughnuts. The coffee hour finished, the women gather the scattered quilt pieces into the brightly colored print bags, stow them away in the cupboards and go by car or school bus to their homes.

Interest in the mission is kept alive throughout the ULCA by means of Tepee Smoke, a mimeographed four-page publication. When Pastor Dehaan first took over the work, only about 300 copies were run off each time, while now there are about 3,000 sent out four times a year. It has been discovered that the breezy little news sheet is an effective tool for sustaining interest in Rocky Boy. Other effective publicity helps are the 13 sets of colored slides which Pastor Dehaan circulates "round-robin" fashion.

The poverty of Rocky Boy's residents means that welfare work is an important part of the work of the mission. Huge cardboard boxes arrive daily at the little Box Elder post office crammed with gifts from church groups. New clothing, toys, household needs, baby garments, books and soap are carried to the attic, where all year Christmas gifts are being wrapped for the 1250 Rocky Boy Indians. Good used clothing is sold at minimum prices two Saturdays a month. The small cost of purchase teaches the Indian something of the value of money and gives him a sense of self-respect.

A special problem to the missionaries are the people who load useless, badly soiled or ragged clothing into boxes (or even gunny sacks) and send them to Rocky Boy. The money paid for postage far exceeds their value, and the task of sorting is made much more difficult.

"Pastor, do you have some white or black cloth for casket covering?"

Pastor Dehaan opens the Mission House door to the grave-faced young Indian and climbs the stairs to the store room where supplies are kept. As he hands the cloth to the young man he asks, "Would you like to have me read the burial service?"

"Yes," the Indian answers, "the men are up there digging now. They should be ready in another hour." The crushed rock of the mountain road spatters with a crackling sound under the station wagon as it climbs up to the cemetery.

The pastor sees a group of young fellows in blue jeans and windbreakers throwing the last spadefuls of earth on the mounds at the sides of the grave. Trudging up the hill from the parked cars are the others, some carrying vases of flowers, all solemnly quiet.

The cloth-covered box is lowered into the grave, and Pastor Dehaan steps forward. Quietly he reads from his pocket Testament the familiar phrases: "Let not your hearts be troubled . . . In my Father's house are many mansions."

Then he speaks to them about death and eternity, simply and directly. Most of those gathered about the open grave are not those who attend Sunday worship in the little log chapel. Here is his real opportunity for proclaiming the gospel. In the assurance that God does not leave them comfortless, someone among the mourners may find new direction to his life.

Far more discouraging to the missionary than the poverty with which he has daily contact is the difficulty of transplanting Christianity into a different culture. He sees the old people still clinging religiously to the ritual of the Sun Dance. He sees young people who have been exposed to Christianity at the mission Sunday school adopt the practices of the weird Peyote cult.

Meanwhile, the evangelism work goes slowly, indeed. After a quarter of a century of work, the mission records show fewer than 300 baptisms.

But when the missionary is tempted to think only of the disappointments, he can remind himself of many hopeful things. He thinks of Mrs. Wind

Chief, almost 70, who walked two miles to bring in her Epiphany appeal offering. He thinks of the 13 children and adults who were baptized on Easter last year. He sees the countless numbers who visit the mission each week because help is there and because love is there. And he believes in the day when they will seek out the mission because Christ is there.

†

Newest of the special missions to reservation Indians is a mission to the Navajos in northern Arizona and New Mexico. John Carlson, a former missionary to Bolivia, is the founder and director of the mission, now just a few months old. No Lutheran synod directly sponsors it, so the work depends on freewill gifts.

The staff includes three teachers and two nurses. This work is a "home level" program, bringing material help, instruction and the gospel of Christ into the adobe hogans of the Navajo shepherds.

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Other work with the Indians of the Southwest is being carried on by the Wisconsin Synod among the Apache Indians in Arizona. The work is done at 12 stations. Nine missionaries, 16 full-time teachers, and 1 part time teacher carry on the program. This same synodical group also ministers to Menominee, Stockbridge and Oneida Indians in Red Springs and Oneida, Wisconsin.



## Indians on Oklahoma Farms . . . . . . The Church's Concern

A bronze historical marker in the neighboring town directs you to the Lutheran Indian Mission at Oaks, Oklahoma. Oaks itself, located in the northeast corner of the state, consists only of the mission, the school and the general store.

From the marker you know that Oaks, for a band of Cherokee Indians, was the end of a long and cruel journey which the history books refer to as the "Trail of Tears." The Cherokees, who lived in Georgia until a little over 100 years ago, were forcibly driven out of their homeland by government decree and compelled to settle in the state of Oklahoma.

If those who drove them from their homes became symbols of white man's injustice to the refugee Cherokees, the white men who shared with them the dangers and the heartache of the journey became symbols of Christian love. These white men who made the journey with them were Moravian missionaries. During the period of getting settled in their new homes and for many years afterward, the Moravians labored among them.

In 1903 the mission work was transferred by the Moravians to the United Evangelical Lutheran Church, and the work has been carried on by the Lutherans ever since.

Church leaders all through the history of the Oaks mission have recog-

nized that education is the key to helping Indians in the area to earn a better living and to lead happier lives. They have realized also that education is the key to the life of Ebenezer Church, the congregation which worships in the beautiful mission chapel built by the Indians out of native rock.

Oaks is a community of both white and Indian farmers. Both the community school and Ebenezer Church are attended by people of both races. Living in two attractive dormitory buildings owned by the mission are about 80 Indian children. The families of these children live in the hills and the woodlands some distance from Oaks, and the dormitory arrangement makes it possible for the youngsters to live near enough to the school and the Sunday school to receive an adequate education.

Besides the dormitories, the mission owns a fine building which houses a modern dining room and a modern laundry.

All the people who live in the village of Oaks either teach in the school or are connected with the mission. There are 12 grades in the school, and the quality of instruction is high. There is an emphasis on vocational agriculture and home instruction. The county's home demonstration agent and the mission cooperate in teaching the Indians better methods of homemaking and family living.

Because the Indians were settled on the poorer farming land, it is important that Indian farmers have the best scientific knowledge to improve their farming methods. Farmers who have gone either to grass farming, beef raising or dairying are doing quite well. It is also fruit country. Strawberries grow well there, but few Indian farmers have enough capital to do this type of farming. Strawberries are a very perishable crop, and farmers who do this type of farming must reckon with the problems of marketing and drouth.

Superintendent of both the mission and the school for many years has been the Rev. C. A. Vammen. At the beginning of each school day there is a 20-minute devotional period, consisting of Scripture reading, prayer and a brief meditation.

For the youngsters who live in the dormitories, there is additional provision for devotional expression. The Rev. S. S. Kaldahl, pastor of Ebenezer Church, leads them in a breakfast time devotional period as well as other devotional periods in the dormitory reception rooms.

Ebenezer's parish program is not unlike that of any other rural parish. In the Sunday school there is an enrollment of about 125. Average attendance at church services is 98. This year regular Sunday evening services have been held. Most of those attending are young people, so Pastor Kahldahl tries to gear this service to their interests. Filmstrips on the catechism, mission studies and Bible studies are favorites with the youngsters. Mid-week services are held during the Lenten season.

Adult instruction classes, confirmation instruction for children, the Helping Hands Society for women, the Luther League — all are included in the program of Ebenezer Church, where Indians and non-Indians work and worship together.

Indians living some distance from Oaks are also the concern of Pastors Vammen and Kaldahl. The Bull Hollow Chapel, the Dave Russell Home, Flint Chapel and the Holland School are the spots where meetings and special preaching missions have been held.

An increasing sense of financial responsibility gives evidence of Ebenezer's growing maturity. The congregation is trying to assume such financial obligations as meeting the benevolence quota, all local expenses outside the pastor's salary and the completion of its building project. Every year \$500 goes to the Church extension fund, a payment on its debt. Now plans are being made for remodeling part of the church building to serve as a parish hall. A meeting room and a number of Sunday school rooms will be included. The people are interested in improving their church, but these things do not come easily in a parish where almost everyone is poor.

An aging Cherokee woman sits in her little windowless cabin, rocking back and forth in her squeaking rocker — rocking and reflecting. She and her people are getting along somehow, but are they getting anywhere? Once her people had stood erect, had made an effort to reach up to white man's ways, but white man's greed had brought them low. Will there ever be a good living when the white men have taken all the good land? Maybe it would be better to leave the land, to go to the cities to find work. But at least this land belongs to the Cherokees, there are no taxes and nobody can drive them away . . . And one gets accustomed to poverty.

Can the Cherokees ever again walk proudly? Is there too much bitterness left after that long cruel journey — that Trail of Tears? Are the Oaks Indians getting somewhere or are they just marking time? The aging Cherokee woman rocks — and wonders.



## Indians in Wisconsin Villages . . .

### . . . The Church's Concern

The pastor and his wife eat the last crumbs of chocolate cake — just the right conclusion for a beef roast dinner — then smile a little to themselves as they look around them. They note the neat, comfortable apartment, the poised young couple, the alert, well-groomed children.

These happy young people, their hosts, are some of their Bethany youngsters grown up! If Pastor and Mrs. Ernest Sihler need any proof that their 20 years at the Bethany Indian Mission have not been spent in vain, they can find it here, in the obvious well-being of the family, in the eagerness with which they talk about their membership in the city church, in the good sense with which they discuss their plans for the future.

Yes, the mission buildings back in Wittenberg are getting a little shabby, and living conditions are still pretty primitive in some of the little Winnebago homes in the Wisconsin woodlands, but then there are people like these! Here a happy transition has been made, and the Church's interest has been justified.

In a log cabin four miles southwest of Wittenberg, Wisconsin in 1884, the Bethany Mission had its birth. Founder of the mission was the Rev. E. J. Homme, who also founded the Homme Old People's Home and Children's Home in that area. Pastor Homme had wandered into the Wisconsin wilderness looking for a site for a children's home. He found the Winnebago Indians living as they had for centuries — spearing fish, hunting with bow and arrow, dressed in buckskin and dwelling in tepees.

It was through Pastor Homme's influence that the (then) Norwegian Synod called a missionary to work among the Winnebagos. O. E. Morstad arrived in Wittenberg on September 30, 1884, and began visiting Indians in their homes. For several months he lived with five Indian boys in the log mission house, serving as teacher and house-father. When Mr. Morstad left in 1886, the boys were brought into the children's home and plans were made to build a larger boarding school at Wittenberg, inviting children from other tribes to attend also. (Most of the other Indians in the area are Oneidas.) Pastor Homme was placed in charge, and early in 1886 he purchased 80 acres of land where the mission now stands. A girls' dormitory, a classroom building, barn and recreation hall were built.

On July 4, 1887, the Bethany Indian Mission and Industrial School was

dedicated, with the Rev. Tobias Larson as superintendent and pastor. Within 10 years of its founding, the enrollment had reached 156. In March of 1888 Axel Jacobson came to serve as a teacher at the mission. He remained in the work for the rest of his life.

When the depression of the early '30's brought serious financial difficulties to the boarding school, Mr. Jacobson tried to keep the school open. The synodical committee which investigated the situation decided to close the school temporarily, and their recommendation was carried out in March of 1933. The Indian children entered the public schools, and it is doubtful that the church will again operate a day school.

However, the Church had no intention of deserting Wittenberg's Winnebagos. A pastor was called to do missionary work among the Indians at Wittenberg and in the areas surrounding it. Pastor E. W. Sihler began his work in May of 1935. He began by seeking to locate those who had attended the mission school in their youth, using them as a nucleus for his missionary work. At first regular services were held in the little Winnebago Church at Wazekah; but by 1940 so many of the Indians had moved in around Wittenberg that the group began to worship in old Bethany Church across the road from the mission. When Bethany Church was torn down in 1941, the assembly room of the school was remodeled into a chapel, using the furniture from Bethany Church.

Indian children, told suddenly that they must attend public school, were stricken with fear. Would they be accepted? "What would their white schoolmates think about their clothes?" Recognizing the psychological dangers involved in this abrupt switch to a non-segregated school, the mission set up its "adoption" project. The children of school age must be given first consideration. The youngsters must have every chance to adjust naturally to the new situation.

Women's church groups far from Wittenberg were each encouraged to "adopt" one Indian child, providing for his clothing needs. In some instances a church group has taken care of the same child all through his school days. The children are encouraged to write letters to them.

Pastor Sihler combines with all his other duties the landlord's role. Living in five cottages owned by the mission are widows and needy Indian families. The Indian "Old Homes," built on the banks of the Embarrass River two miles north of Wittenberg, are very modest cabins; but they have been insulated and wired for electricity. The Women's Missionary Federation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, which purchased the homes in 1930, also finances repairs on the buildings.

A windbreak of White, Scotch and Norway pines forms a beautiful site for the little cottages. Visiting the homes, Pastor Sihler may stop to chop wood for an aged Indian widow. He may check a draft coming in around the windows. He may get the idea for a minor remodeling project. By adding a room onto one of the church-owned cottages, the pastor may give other Indian families the idea that separate bedrooms for the boys and the girls in the family are a good idea.

The classrooms at the Bethany Mission, now vacant most of the year, become alive again for three weeks each summer. The Christian Summer School is staffed by volunteer teachers, most of them public school teachers from neighboring states. The summer school is conducted very much like a Bible camp. Pupils from a distance are housed in the school dormitories, while those from the immediate area are day students. Swimming, picnics and playground games are combined with serious Bible study. Every afternoon at three there is a "cookie break" for the young scholars.

At first only Indian children attended the school, but in recent years the Bethany School has been combined with the vacation schools of First Lutheran Church in Wittenberg and the Homme Children's Home. Enrollment of Indian and white children has reached as high as 150.

Because much of the work done by the Wittenberg Indians is seasonal, involving migratory farm work, cannery work or trapping, the people are dependent on basket and beadwork during the winter. There must be a market for their products, so the mission finds itself in the basket and beadwork business.



Mrs. Leonard Hapuika and Mrs. Florence Whitewing weaving baskets

The industrial revolution seems remote, indeed, when one is visiting in a Winnebago home where basket-making is a family enterprise. Ash logs from which the baskets are made are cut down and carried home by the man of the house. (Those cut near a stream are the most supple for basket work.) The mother sits on the floor or the bed peeling down the long, smooth white strips, layer after layer. Handlemaking, a very exacting art, usually falls to the man of the household. The children are asked to roll up the strips and to dip them into the brilliant colors of the dye bath. Then the women weave the strips into strong baskets in a variety of sizes and shapes.

Wittenberg is still "home base" for the Bethany Indian Mission, but Pastor Sihler now finds that his "parish" sprawls all the way down to Mauston, 130 miles away. Indeed, there are times during the year when he does work at LaCrosse, on the eastern border of Wisconsin and during the cherry-picking season he spends three weeks with migrant Indians way up in the peninsula which cuts into Lake Michigan around Green Bay. Thus, the actual span of his work is about 300 miles. Included are chapel services at Wittenberg and Wisconsin Rapids and Ladies' Aid groups at Schofield, Mauston and Tigerton.

There are about 800 Indians for whom he feels a responsibility. Bethany Mission is not primarily concerned with perpetuating itself as an institution. Its one goal is to bring Christ's gospel to the Indian people. Its program has been very flexible, taking into account the changing needs of the people to whom it ministers. If a number of Indians move to a new community where no mission work has been done before, the mission follows them there with its ministry. If a white church in a given area is interested in drawing the Indians into its fellowship and if the Indians show an interest in joining the church, the move has Pastor Sihler's blessing. From 1935 to 1946 there were

meetings at Tigerton, but now some have joined a white church in town while some have moved away.

In 1943, learning that a number of Indian families had moved to Wisconsin Rapids, the pastor visited the town, looking for a spot for a Christmas program. He was given permission to use a "gospel hall" for the program and for occasional services after that. The building, something of an architectural monstrosity, had evolved from a de-commissioned streetcar. Several additions had been constructed over the years when it served as a tavern and a dance hall. Because the rambling, white frame structure served well as a temporary chapel, it was purchased in 1946 with \$900 received as a bequest. Services are held there each Sunday evening.

A number of Indian homes are located around the cranberry marshes where the people work. For several summers a vacation Bible school has been conducted at Gaynor's Marsh near Wisconsin Rapids. At harvest time a group of small white buildings serve as bunkhouses for the Indians who spend the day gathering berries with their box-like "rakes"; but at Bible school time these same buildings provide classroom space for the Indian children.

In 1948 Pastor Sihler felt that God's Spirit was bidding him to start work at Mauston, so he toured the area, visiting in the homes. He was accompanied by the Mauston pastor, who was interested in the work. From the very first he received help from women in the Mauston parish, who served as liaison between their congregation and the Indian people. These women helped to organize a Ladies' Aid group for the Indian women. Soon there were Indian adults who joined the Mauston Church and Indian children studying at the Sunday school.

Packing the car for one of his regular visits to his scattered parishioners outside of Wittenberg can be a complicated process for Pastor Sihler. There are so many things to remember — the New Testament in sight-saving print for Mr. Little Soldier, whose eyes are failing him; hymnbooks and a film for the Mauston Ladies' Aid meeting; candlesticks, chalice, and paten for a bedside communion service; a quilt, the mission's traditional wedding gift for newly married couples.

After 20 years of visiting in the homes of his Indian friends, Pastor Sihler is accepted almost as a member of the family. He drops in and chats with them about the weather, their work, happenings at church and at school. He may stop by the Decorah home and find the family sitting around the warm wood stove making the bows and arrows which will be sold at souvenir shops around the Dells. The young Mrs. Decorah paints designs on the bows while old Mr. Decorah and his two sons whittle more bows and arrows into shape.

From little school boys who make their own sleds to old men like Mr. Decorah, the Indians all seem to have a special gift for making things with their hands. The hands of an Indian never seem to grow old. Mr. Decorah, at the age of 84, whittles the clean white wood with deftness and skill; and his hands look as lean and strong as those of a 30-year-old.

Even in the humblest homes there are religious pictures on the wall, and Pastor Sihler knows that his Scripture reading will be heard with reverent attention. In one home he administers the Sacrament, in another he invites a housewife to Ladies' Aid meeting, in another he speaks to a teen-age boy who would like to go to college. There may be a simple home wedding ceremony to perform. He calls everyone by his or her first name and knows just enough phrases in the Winnebago language so that his Indian friends are amused by his efforts.

The modern automobiles parked outside the little houses are not regarded as an extravagance by the man who has learned how important it is for Indians to get together. Kinship ties are important to them, and they will drive many miles for a neighborly good time.

Ladies' Aid in a Mauston Indian home is quite likely to be an all-day

affair, beginning with a Bible study period and business meeting in the morning and continuing with a program or work project in the afternoon.

"I think we should send a gift to Ray's family. He's been in the hospital for so long." "As an Aid project we might give help to one of the young people attending Haskell Institute." "What shall we serve for our Ladies' Aid supper?" These are typical quotations from a business meeting at the Mauston Aid.

The lunch served at noon must be a big one, because these Ladies' Aid meetings are not restricted to women members. Pre-school children are always on hand, and the men also like to drop in, particularly if Pastor Sihler plans to show movies. They all feast on fruited Jello, macaroni and cheese, meat loaf sandwiches, coffee and doughnuts.

The colored movies, meant to show how the Wisconsin Indians live as well as how the Bethany Mission does its works, have been taken by the pastor to be shown to various church groups. However, the Indians themselves are most interested in them, because they see the people and the places that are familiar to them. They are delighted to see the boy next door exhibiting the fish he has caught. They watch with interest as a neighbor woman stirs up a batch of their favorite "fry bread."

For Pastor Sihler's family, the Bethany Mission isn't just "Father's work." Mrs. Sihler not only helps with the routine affairs of the mission but also visits with the Indian families, reading to them from the Word of God, talking with them about their problems, assisting with Christmas programs.

The three daughters of the household have all played the piano for services in the mission chapel from the time they were old enough to find their way around the keyboard. And the whole family packs up and goes along each summer to the cherry orchards in Door County, where the Indians live in camps and harvest the cherry crop. The Sihlers camp in an orchard with the pickers. The pastor conducts services in a different orchard each week night and in several orchards on Sunday.

Because Indians like to move from place to place, usually in search of better employment, the population is constantly shifting. But Pastor Sihler has devoted 20 years to "keeping track of people." When families move to an urban center like Milwaukee, Green Bay, or Chicago, he writes to pastors in the city asking them to call on the Indians and welcome them to their churches. He also writes to the Indians themselves, encouraging them to affiliate with the city church. Often he visits them in their new homes.

As Pastor Sihler sends the letters of transfer out to churches in Illinois and Indiana and California, he knows that Bethany's mission is bearing fruit. He knows that his Winnebago and Oneida friends are taking with them to the city their faith in the Lord of the Church.



## Indians in Transition . . .

. . . The Church's Concern

Because they are United States citizens with the legal freedom to go where they wish, there has always been some movement of American Indians away from the reservations. In recent years, however, the pace has been stepped up. The ex-G.I. who has become familiar with non-reservation life, the ambitious student who sees the opportunity for a satisfying career, the

family man who sees the hopelessness of trying to make a living on overpopulated, unproductive land — these are some of the Indians who decide to break off reservation ties and move to town.

The decision does not come easily. Many who might otherwise move away are held back by their tribal land rights, emotional ties to the reservation, fear of the unknown, unfamiliarity with the urban pattern of living or lack of work experience. It is with these newcomers to America's towns and cities that the Church finds its latest, newest challenge in service to the American Indians. Whether they live in shacks along the river bank or in modern homes in the suburbs, the Indians must be welcomed into the fellowship of churches in their community.

Because they bring no money with them and because their lack of work experience prevents their finding good jobs immediately, most Indian newcomers begin city life at the bottom of the economic scale. They tend to gather in "ghettos" in the city's poorest housing areas. A church interested in evangelizing the Indian is thus almost automatically involved in a concern for his housing, fuel for his stove, shoes for his children.

Because acquisitiveness and drive for personal advancement are not considered virtues in the Indian culture, the Indian in transition has a difficult time with money matters. But economic problems are not nearly so grave as the psychological conflict of the Indian who finds himself caught between two cultures — a foreigner in his own country. It is a frightening thing for the reservation Indian to walk into a fast-moving world of streetcars and elevated trains, telephones and elevators. It is a frightening thing to begin working and living among the white men from whom his people have received so much abuse. It is a bewildering thing suddenly to have to worry about rents and taxes, landlords and traffic regulations, department store shopping and job adjustment.

The man who finds that his Indian-ness is a barrier to success in a new environment is forced to give up that Indian-ness. Without it, however, he is not an integrated personality. He begins to reject himself. He can neither remain an Indian nor become a white man. The problem is a profoundly spiritual one, and no church can hope to serve the Indian unless it understands the psychological difficulties involved.

A hopeful development since 1952 has been the placement and relocation program of the Bureau of Indian affairs. The program is set up to help reservation Indians relocate in industrial centers. Offices are located in Chicago, Denver, Los Angeles and Oakland; and additional centers are being considered. Any individual or family may apply for relocation:

- 1) If they are enrolled with an Indian reservation
- 2) If they have a sincere desire to resettle
- 3) If there is an able-bodied wage-earner in the family.



Mrs. Fred Loast (Oneida Indian Lutheran) in her apartment in Milwaukee

Applications made at the reservation are sent to the office in the city where the Indians wish to go. When an Indian arrives at a relocation office, checks for four weeks' subsistence are waiting for him.

The Chicago office has a method for giving him his first psychological boost while he is sitting in the waiting room. He is handed a blue folder which assures him that he will soon feel at home in the city, that all of Chicago is not as gray and ugly as the neighborhood where the office is located. He is admonished not to give up if the rush and the confusion of the city seem frightening at first. Other items on the orientation folder tell about the Indians' own recreation center, warn that "smart Indians and other smart people avoid Skid Row," and explain the city transportation system.

Why are the Indians, accustomed to a rural environment, relocated in the large industrial centers? Relocation officers give three reasons:

First, the greatest discrimination against Indians exists in non-Indian communities near reservations. In the cities they are more easily accepted.

Second, the Indian people with their manual dexterity make excellent industrial workers — riveters, machine operators and assembly workers.

Third, the possibilities for employment are greater in an industrial center.

Before an Indian family arrives in the city, the relocation office has already begun house-hunting for them. In Chicago, for example, there is one full-time worker who does nothing but hunt for apartments for Indians. A deliberate policy of scattering the people is practiced, so that all the Indians do not gather in one little neighborhood. Thus, Chicago's 4,000 Indians live in so many parts of the city that they are scarcely noticed in the city's huge population.

This fact is of significance to churches, because it means that in cities with relocation offices a segregated congregation "for Indians only" would be a virtual impossibility even if it were desirable.

In employment counseling, an Indian's aptitudes, interests and previous job experience are evaluated, and he is guided to job opportunities. Heavy labor, nurses' aide work, stock work, stenography, welding, baby sitting — all of these jobs and many more are being handled with skill by relocated Indians. In the Chicago office, about two-thirds of the relocated families have been the families of ex-G.I.'s. When the first job has been found, the relocation office does not make a point of follow-up work, because it seeks to give the Indian a sense of self-sufficiency. Of course further help is available to those who ask for it.

As America's Indian population becomes more and more scattered, an increasing number of Lutheran congregations has discovered that "Indian missions" means showing an interest in that family down the street. A village church near an Indian reservation may have two Indian children in its Sunday school. A city church may have on its membership rolls two or three Indian families.

For example, in a survey conducted in 1954, Pastor Jan Bengston discovered that Lutheran churches in Minnesota and Wisconsin were reaching a total of 257 Indians through regular congregations. Messiah Lutheran Church in Minneapolis reported one adult member, while Trinity Church in Green Bay, Wisconsin, ministered to 40 Indians. The 257 Indians were being served by 35 different congregations.

In none of these instances where white and Indian members are integrated into one congregation has any resistance been reported on the part of white members. Such tension as does exist is more economic than racial. Indian members do not always feel at home with their prosperous, well-dressed white neighbors. This may be one reason why the children are more faithful in Sunday school than are their parents in church attendance.

No single approach has been used in reaching Indian families. At Trinity in Green Bay, most of them had been sent to the pastor by Pastor Sihler of

the Bethany Mission at Wittenberg, while others have been reached in the parish evangelism visitation.

Zion Lutheran Church of International Falls, Minnesota, has reached Indian people in a variety of ways. Some are married to white persons. Some children attend weekday released-time classes or enter Sunday school and thus become a part of the parish life.

At Bethel Church in Green Bay a special mission brought the Indians into the church.

In South St. Paul, a "Welcome Wagon lady" reported to the pastor of Bethesda Lutheran Church that a Lutheran Indian family from Wisconsin was living in a small hut on the river bank. Later when the Mississippi River flooded and their home was washed away, the family was invited to live in the church basement for a month or two. Later the parents and nine children became members of the church.

Not too long ago members of Minneapolis' huge Central Lutheran Church were astonished to learn that there were about 3,000 Indians living within walking distance of their church. Almost all were new to the city and almost all were having severe problems in adjusting to city life. They were not re-located by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, but had simply drifted into the city on their own.

Since that time a committee, composed of representatives from four ELC churches in that part of the city, has been organized to arrange for a ministry to these Indians. The churches are Central, Our Savior's, St. Paul's and Bethany. The Synod's home mission board provided funds; and a public health nurse, Miss Evelyn Nappe, was hired to do home visitation.

Although the work has only been done for a few months and is still in the experimental stage, there are already a few families who have found their way into the churches. At Central, for example, there are about eight or ten Indian children in the Sunday school, two girls in the high school choir and others in the confirmation classes and the Girl Scout troop. Three adult Indians have been confirmed, and a number of baptisms have taken place.

The ELC has also begun an effort to reach the 14,000 Indians living in North Dakota. They are at the Turtle Mountain, Fort Berthold, Fort Totten and Standing Rock Reservations; but they are also scattered throughout the state. Recognizing that the day for separate missions for minority groups is drawing to a close, this project has worked through local congregations since its beginning, just a few months ago.

Pastor Loren L. Spaulding was called to initiate the North Dakota work, which will center in the Turtle Mountain Reservation. The pastor has his headquarters at Rolla, where there are now a number of Indians attending the local church. The congregation at Dunseith also has a number of Indian members now. Small groups have also been reached at Walhalla and Minot.

A similar project is planned by the ELC for the state of South Dakota, where the Indian population has reached 31,000.

**The willingness with which the Indians have been received into existing congregations indicates that the Lutheran Church is now ready to serve these "Indians in transition."**

If we show respect for the unique gifts which they are able to bring to our nation's culture . . . if we give them the opportunity to learn new skills which will earn for them a fuller measure of security . . . if we lead them to Christ, at whose cross all men share equally in the inheritance of love . . . then America's Indians can once again walk proudly in the land of their fathers.

**WOMEN'S MISSIONARY SOCIETY**

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